DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 477 FL 007 355

TITLE	English as a Second Language in Kindergarten--Teaching Pronunciation and Grammar. Preschool Education Series, No. 2. Indochinese Refugee Education Guides.
INSTITUTION	Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	6p.; Adapted from "Teaching English as a Second Language in the Kindergarten," by Muriel Saville-Troike; For related documents, see FL 007 354-357
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; Classroom Games; *English (Second Language); Grammar; *Indochinese; Interference (Language Learning); *Kindergarten; Language Instruction; *Pattern Drills (Language); Phonology; Preschool Education; Pronunciation; Pronunciation Instruction; Refugees; Sentence Structure; Speaking Activities; Substitution Drills; *Teaching Guides; Teaching Methods; Vietnamese

ABSTRACT

The sequence in which sounds, structures, and vocabulary are presented is important in teaching a second language efficiently. The guidelines given here for the teaching English pronunciation and grammar in the kindergarten are based on that premise. The guidelines are given in four sections: (1) general, for all direct language instruction; (2) how to teach the sounds of English, including suggestions for drills; (3) various structured activities for teaching the sentence patterns of English; and (4) language drills and games for the teaching of pronunciation difficulties specific to Vietnamese students. (TL)

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Indochinese Refugee Education Guides

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PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SERIES: English as a Second Language in Kindergarten -- Teaching Pronunciation and Grammar

A variety of methods for teaching language has been suggested and tried with all ages of students and with varying degrees of success. Particularly in early childhood education, an emphasis has often been placed on "fostering attitudes" and "developing interests", accompanied by little or no direct language instruction. Some educators have felt that children "catch" a second language by exposure, much as they catch the measles, but their record of academic failure suggests that this is not the case.

While it is much easier for a young child to acquire a second language than it is for an adult to, even he cannot learn it as he did his first. For one thing, a child entering kindergarten has spent his waking hours for four years mastering his native language, but the school has only a few hours a day to bring the child to the same level of competence in the second language if he is to achieve "on grade level" in first grade in an English-speaking school. This is one reason why the presentation of sounds, structure, and vocabulary must be made in a way which efficiently short-cuts the time required for learning English. The key to this efficiency is in the selection of linguistic material to be taught and in the ordering of structures for sequential presentation.

The following guidelines apply to all direct language instruction:

1. Learning a new language system involves developing a new set of habits, and practice is essential to success.

2. Different rates of learning and different levels of experience and interest should always be taken into account.

3. Language material should be graded, with easier structures presented first. Because language learning is cumulative, new structures will build on what has already been learned.

4. The instructional materials should be based where possible on a contrastive analysis of standard English and the children's language system.

5. Opportunities to practice mistakes should be minimized. Methods and materials should help set a pattern of success for children learning English.

Adapted from "Teaching English as a Second Language in the Kindergarten", by Muriel Saville-Troike.

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6. No more than ten to twelve children should be in a single group for most language teaching activities.

7. Children should be arranged in a semicircle, perhaps sitting on the floor, but never in rows of chairs or desks.

8. Most children do not master a concept or skill in one lesson; there is a need for repetition while these are firmly established.

9. Even when concentrating on teaching the phonemes (or sounds) of English, they should not be presented or practiced in isolation. Speech sounds occur as parts of words, and words as parts of sentences. Language is a way of conveying meaning, and this essential characteristic should not be left out of language lessons.

10. Real objects should be used whenever possible to illustrate meaning. Pictures are also helpful, but a variety should be used to help define the range of experience covered by the word. Pictures should be large enough for the children to see them easily.

11. In order to clarify meaning, translate when necessary and where possible into the language of the children.

12. The vocabulary content for language lessons should be selected for immediate need and usefulness, to make learning and retention more likely.

13. New elements of pronunciation, grammatical structures, or vocabulary should be introduced only in the contexts of elements which have been previously taught.

14. Language drills can be organized into play activities or meaningful communication exchanges, or made available in game form. For instance, children may group pictures on a flannel board or paste them in a scrapbook, sorted according to which words begin with the same sound.

15. Language teaching is not something which goes on just during the scheduled language period. A wide variety of activities during the day should be used to reinforce patterns. To repeat what was said earlier: <u>children will learn English far more efficiently if there is opportunity throughout the rest of the school day for them to participate in varied activities in the room and on the playground with English-speaking classmates</u>.

Very early in the language program, the sounds which exist in English but not in the students' native language should be taught.

1. Teach the concept "same-different" as applied to objects, and then to the sounds of English.

   a. Say minimal pairs, illustrated with pictures of actions whenever possible, and have the students repeat them.

chair	share
choose	shoes
chip	ship

b. Say pairs of words and ask if they are "the same" or "different".

chair	chair
shoe	shoe
chip	ship

c. Include the words in minimal pair sentences. Students may dramatize each sentence or identify an appropriate picture.

I have a chip.	I am watching dishes.
I have a ship.	I am washing dishes.

2. Develop recognition drills with sets of similar words.

sheep	ship	cheap	chip
beet	bit	bait	bat

3. Model the pronunciation of words and sentences and have students repeat after you, as a group and individually.

4. Provide a variety of recorded language material for listening experiences.

5. Use games appropriate to the age and interest level of the students to provide group and individual pronunciation drill.
   For instance,
   Cut small shoes from colored paper.
   Put them in a box or bag and have a student close his eyes and choose a shoe.
   The others say:
   New shoes, new shoes,
   which color do you choose?
   The individual student says:
   I choose (color) shoes.

The basic sentence patterns of English may be introduced and practiced through a variety of structured activities, including the types of pattern drills suggested below. Actions and objects should accompany the patterns so meaning is assured.

1. Mim-Mem (mimicry-memorization) -- students imitate a model and then repeat it until the response is memorized.
   Teacher: John is running.
   Students: John is running.

2. Chain-drill -- one student makes a statement or response, then another student, and then another. (Each student responding should actually have the object and show it as he says the sentence.)
   T: I have a book.
   S_1: I have a book.
   S_2: I have a book.

3. Substitution -- a word is replaced by another word of the same grammatical class, as a noun for a noun.
   T: I see a book.
   truck
   S: I see a truck.
   T: block
   S: I see a block.

4. Replacement -- replace one element by another, as a pronoun for a noun.
   T: John has a book
   S: He has a book.
   T: Mary has a book.
   S: She has a book.

5. Conversion -- replace one form of a word with another, as past for present when an action is finished.
   T: John is jumping.
   S: John jumped.

6. Expansion -- give the students a word to be added to a sentence.
   T: The boy is running.
   big
   S: The big boy is running.
   T: fast
   S: The big boy is running fast.

7. Transformation -- change in word order, as from question to statement, or affirmative statement to negative statement.
   T: Is John jumping?
   S: John is jumping.
   T: Mary is running.
   S: Mary is not running.

Important words to include in the early English lessons are the function words such as prepositions and conjunctions, which are needed to express relationships in the basic sentence patterns.

Good sources for the content words to be used in language drills, such as nouns and verbs, are the objects and activities in the classroom and surrounding environment.

Language Drills and Games

Below you will find listed several sounds which may present particular difficulties for your Vietnamese pupils. These difficulties arise from the fact that either the sounds don't exist in Vietnamese or two sounds are so close that they are not distinguished in Vietnamese. After the sounds, you will find illustrative words, often arranged in minimal pairs. A minimal pair is a pair of words which are sounded identically, except for the target phoneme (sound): "Bat" and "pat" are a minimal pair, with the "b"/"p" contrast as the target. These can be utilized in rhymes, games, etc., to encourage your Vietnamese pupils to learn to hear and produce the differences.

1. s/sh/ in initial position:
   see/she
   so/show

2. s/z/ in final position:
   ice/eyes
   hiss/his
   niece/knees

3. t/d/ in final positions:
   seat/seed
   neat/need

4. t/th/ in initial position:
   taught/thought
   tank/thank

5. t/th/s/ in initial position:
   tie/thigh/sigh
   team/theme/seem
   tank/thank/sank

6. th/ in medial position:
   feather
   mother
   brother
   father
   together
   other

7. k/g/ in final position:
   leak/league
   lock/log
   back/bag
   tack/tag

8. r/ in final position:
   there
   care
   fear
   where
   bear
   year

9. v/ in final position:
   live
   give
   five
   hive

10. l/d/ in final position:
    bill/build
    coal/cold
    toll/told
    pull/pulled
    said/sailed
    feel/field
    hole/hold

11. p/b/ in initial position:
    bat/pat
    bill/pill
    bowl/pole

Children should not be corrected when they make pronunciation and grammatical errors in normal communication contexts with adults or with each other. While brief periods of direct language instruction are very helpful in second language learning, untimely correction can have negative consequences for both fluency and attitudes.